WAR OF THE GODS
19
SUICIDE SQUAD
SUICIDE SQUAD
58
OCT 91
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GEOF KARL
OSTRANDER
YALE
ISHERWOOD
CAMPANELLA

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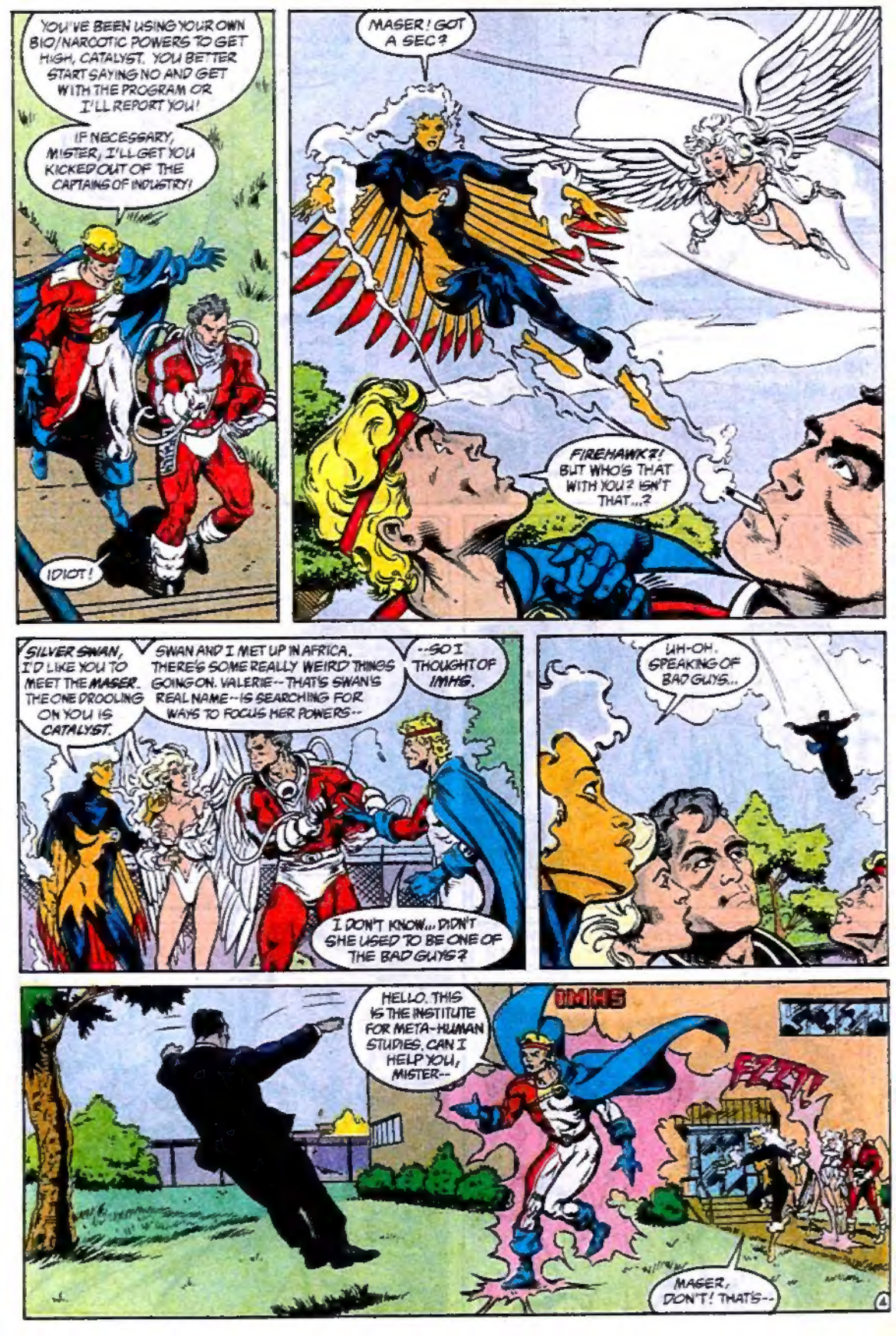
WELL, WELL, IVY MY GIRL-- WHAT HAVE WE HERE?
HUMMMMM! IT'S EITHER A VERY EXOTIC WOMAN'S HEALTH SPA OR-- SOMETHING INTERESTING.
I'VE BEEN DOWN HERE A LONG TIME. I'VE RENEWED MY SUPPLY OF BOTANICAL TOXINS, AND COUNT VERTIGO'S HAD PLENTY OF TIME TO GET OVER WANTING TO KILL ME. AND I'M BORED.
HMMMMM. I WONDER IF THERE'S SOME SORT OF PERCENTAGE I CAN WORK OFF THOSE GOOPS ON THE ISLAND?
GROWL!
SNARRRL!
EEK!
FWUMP!

THE INSTITUTE FOR META-HUMAN STUDIES, OUTSIDE PITTSBURGH...
SO. AMANDA WAS RIGHT. YOU REALLY ARE LEAVING.
HELLO, BEN. YES, I HAVE TO. I HAVE A BUSINESS THAT I MUST TEND TO, OBLIGATIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES THAT I MUST HONOR.
I'M SORRY. I SHOULD'VE COME TO SEE YOU WHILE YOU WERE LAID UP...
BEN... I'M NOT ANGRY WITH YOU. NOT ANYMORE. I KNOW WHAT YOU DID TO SAVE MY LIFE BACK IN JERUSALEM.
BUT PEOPLE CHANGE. YOU HAVE. NOW I HAVE, TOO.
I'VE LOOKED IN MY HEART, LOOKED HARD, AND I CAN'T FIND THE LOVE I ONCE HAD FOR YOU. ALL I HAVE IS A MEMORY OF THE LOVE I ONCE FELT.
AND YOU CAN'T SUSTAIN A RELATIONSHIP ON THE WAY IT USED TO BE.
I'M FOND OF YOU. I HOPE I ALWAYS WILL BE.
I WISH YOU THE BEST. I MEAN THAT SINCERELY. I WISH THE SAME FOR AMANDA AND THE SQUAD. BUT MY TIME WITH HER, WITH THEM, WITH YOU IS PAST.
TAKE CARE, BEN. YOU'RE A GOOD MAN, WHATEVER YOU MAY THINK AT THE MOMENT.
BYE-BYE.

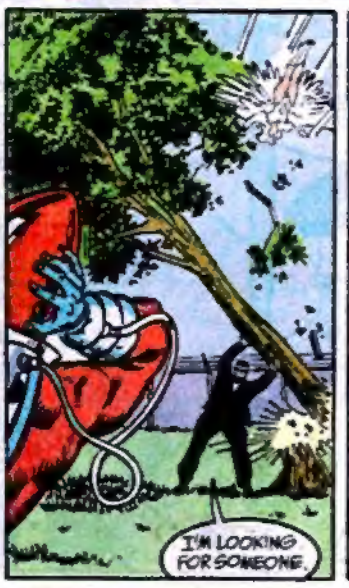

YOU'VE BEEN USING YOUR OWN BIO/NARCOTIC POWERS TO GET HIGH, CATALYST. YOU BETTER START SAYING NO AND GET WITH THE PROGRAM OR I'LL REPORT YOU!
IF NECESSARY, MISTER, I'LL GET YOU KICKED OUT OF THE CAPTAINS OF INDUSTRY!
IDIOT!
MASER! GOT A SEC?
FIREHAWK?! BUT WHO'S THAT WITH YOU? ISN'T THAT...?
SILVER SWAN, I'D LIKE YOU TO MEET THE MASER. THE ONE DROOLING ON YOU IS CATALYST.
SWAN AND I MET UP IN AFRICA. THERE'S SOME REALLY WEIRD THINGS GOING ON. VALERIE--THAT'S SWAN'S REAL NAME--IS SEARCHING FOR WAYS TO FOCUS HER POWERS--
--SO I THOUGHT OF IMHS.
I DON'T KNOW... DIDN'T SHE USED TO BE ONE OF THE BAD GUYS?
UH-OH. SPEAKING OF BAD GUYS...
HELLO. THIS IS THE INSTITUTE FOR META-HUMAN STUDIES. CAN I HELP YOU, MISTER--
IMHS
FZZZT!
MASER, DON'T! THAT'S--
4

SWOK!
...BLACK ADAM!

EH, LITTLE BIRD, WHILE THESE CHILDREN PLAY, WHY DO WE NOT GO OFF AND MAKE SOME SPORT OF OUR OWN, EH?
EEEUUUMMM!

HE DIDN'T EVEN FLINCH!
THIS IS TROUBLE!
FASSHH!

HE'S GOT MORE THAN ONE TO TAKE ON!
SCHREEEEEE!
I DON'T THINK HE CARES.

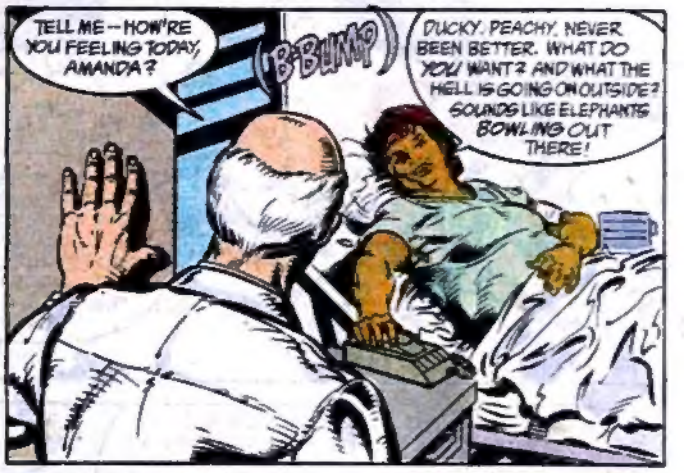

I'M LOOKING FOR SOMEONE.

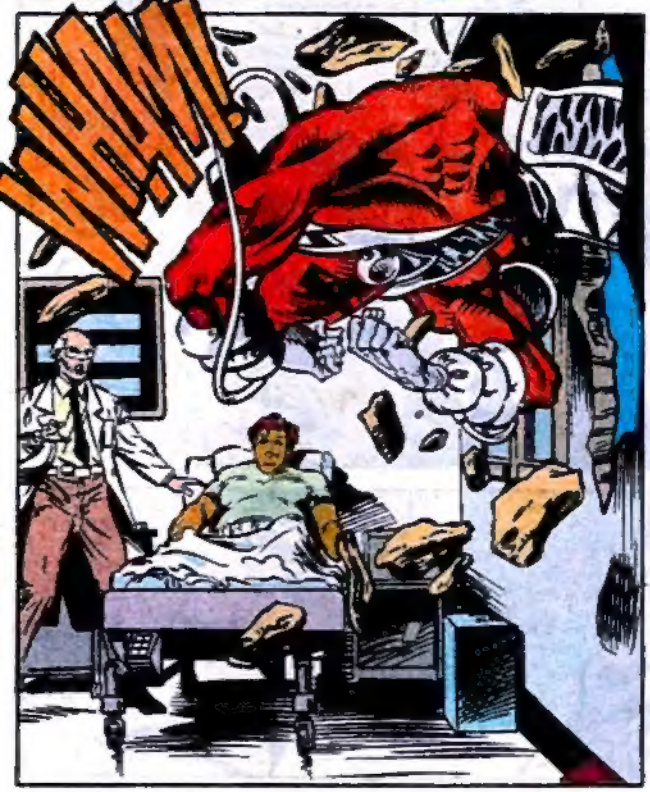
YOU'RE GETTING IN MY WAY.

"BRING ME TO THE ONE CALLED AMANDA WALLER -- OR DIE."
I WANT TO THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP IN JAPAN, SHAW.
ONE OTHER THING. BEN'S HEARD FROM THIS JANISSARY HE USED TO KNOW OVER IN LEBANON WHO WANTS WORK WITH THE SQUAD. BEN SAYS YOU CAN VOUCH FOR HIM, TOO. GUY'S NAME IS JOHN HENRY MARTIN.
(THUMP)
SO JOHN HENRY'S ALIVE! WHY AM I NOT AMAZED?
YEAH, I KNOW HIM. NICKNAME'S OUTLAW. HE WAS A CON DOING HARD TIME WHEN THE METAGENE BOMB WENT OFF.
GAVE HIM A TOUGH HIDE, LOTS OF MUSCLE BUT NO CONTROL. HE CAN SNAP YOUR SPINE WITH A PAT ON THE BACK AND NEVER MEAN TO DO IT.
WHAT'S HE LIKE AS A PERSON? CAN WE WORK WITH HIM?
THIS MEANS YOU!
ROUGH. HARD. DECENT ENOUGH IN HIS OWN FASHION. BUT JOHN HENRY'S BEEN IN AND OUT OF PRISON ALL HIS LIFE.
SHOULD BE THERE NOW; IF HE ENTERS THE STATES, THEY'LL NAB HIM.
THAT'S OKAY. WE'LL USE HIM ONLY ON CASES OUTSIDE THE COUNTRY. HE'S IN--ON YOUR SAY-SO.
WHAT ABOUT YOU? YOU THINK OVER MY OFFER?

I ALREADY GOT A JOB.
SO DO I, BUT I'M GOING TO BE LAID UP FOR AWHILE. BEEN SIX WEEKS AS IS AND LA GRIEVE IS THREATENING TO STICK ME IN THE BOOBY HATCH IF I TRY GETTING UP TOO SOON.
LOOK, YOU CAN PICK AND CHOOSE YOUR MISSIONS AND KEEP YOUR DAY JOB. IT'S A GOOD TRADE-OFF -- YOU GET AN ADRENALIN FIX AND YOU HELP HUMANITY BY KEEPING ME HONEST.
WHUMP
BWAP

THAT'S NOT A PART-TIME JOB -- THAT'S A CAREER.
HO HO. HO HO HO.
GIVE ME A CALL WHEN YOU NEED ME. WE'LL TALK. :click:


TELL ME -- HOW'RE YOU FEELING TODAY, AMANDA?
B-BUMP
DUCKY. PEACHY. NEVER BEEN BETTER. WHAT DO YOU WANT? AND WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON OUTSIDE? SOUNDS LIKE ELEPHANTS BOWLING OUT THERE!


WHAM!

THERE'S A MAN OUTSIDE WHO CALLS HIMSELF BLACK ADAM AND HE'S MEETING WITH YOU OR HE TURNS THE INSTITUTE INTO A CRATER.
HIS CHOICE OF WORDS, BY THE WAY.

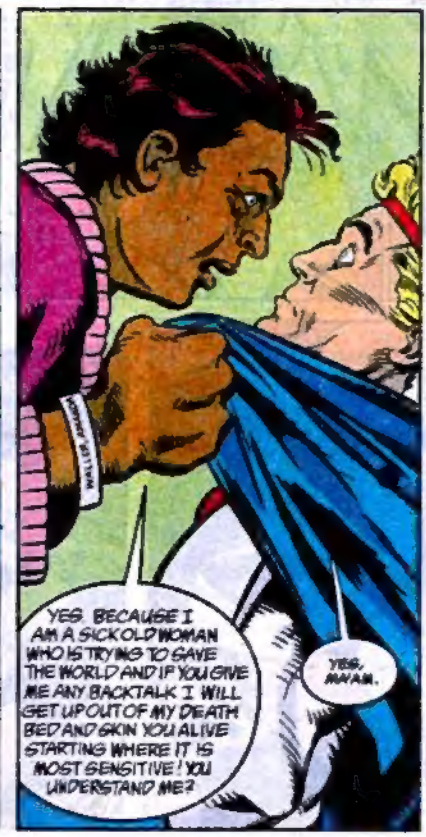
I LIKE A MAN WHO DOESN'T MINCE WORDS.
"LET ME PULL ON MY ROBE AND THEN SEE WHAT THIS MANIAC WANTS."
LET ME SEE IF I'VE GOT THIS RIGHT.
A LOT OF THE NASTY STUFF BEEN HAPPENING IN THE WORLD FOR THE PAST FEW DAYS IS BECAUSE OF THIS WITCH CIRCE WHO IS HOLED UP IN AN ISLAND IN A LAKE IN THE AMAZON RAIN FOREST.
YES. THAT IS CORRECT. YES.
THIS ISLAND IS GUARDED BY WEREBEASTS AND SOME MID-EAST AMAZONS WHO ARE DISTANT BUT VICIOUS COUSINS TO WONDER WOMAN.
FEELING, FOR WHATEVER REASON, THAT THE FORMIDABLE POWER YOU ALREADY GOT ISN'T ENOUGH, YOU COME TO ME.
ANYWAY, YOU WANT US TO COMBINE FORCES AND GO TAKE OUT THIS WITCH. WHAT YOU'RE BASICALLY ASKING FOR ARE WARM BODIES FOR CANNON FODDER TO DRAW ENEMY FIRE WHILE YOU GO AFTER CIRCE YOURSELF.
IT'S THE BEST WAY.
WHAT MAKES YOU THINK MY PEOPLE'LL AGREE TO DO THAT?
YOUR GROUP TITLE IS THE SUICIDE SQUAD, CORRECT?
THAT'S THE SORT OF THING THAT SUICIDE SQUADS DO, IS IT NOT?
WHY DON'T YOU JUST GRAB A FEW ATOMIC BOMBS AND NUKE THE PLACE?
BECAUSE THAT WAY I DON'T GET TO SEE THEIR BLOOD SPURT.

BESIDES, ATOM BOMBS MAY NOT WORK AGAINST MAGIC. AND, BEFORE WE COULD LAUNCH A FOLLOW-UP ATTACK, CIRCE WOULD BE WARNED AND GONE.
AND IF WE DECLINE THIS CLAMBAKE?

THEN I WILL SEE YOUR BLOOD SPURT. YOURS AND EVERYONE ELSE'S WITHIN A 100-MILE RADIUS. I DO HAVE THAT KIND OF POWER AND I WILL USE IT.

ALSO--CIRCE WILL TRIUMPH AND IT WILL BE HER WORLD. I WANT IT TO BE MINE. RIGHT NOW, SHE IS THE MORE IMMEDIATE THREAT.
WELL, ON THAT POINT, I AGREE. BUT WE NEED MORE WARM BODIES. THE MORE WE GOT GOING IN, THE BETTER THE CHANCES OF MORE RETURNING.
MAGER, FIREHAWK, YOU OTHER TWO--YOU'RE IN ON THIS.

GET BOOMERANG, NIGHTSHADE AND DEADSHOT TOGETHER. MAGER, YOU ZAP DOWN THERE AND GET ME SOME CLEAR PICTURES OF AN AREA CLOSE TO THE ISLAND.
NIGHTSHADE CAN TELEPORT US THERE IF SHE HAS A VISUAL. I'LL HAVE HER BRING THIS JOHN HENRY MARTIN CHARACTER UP HERE, TOO.
EXCUSE ME, BUT IS THERE A REASON I SHOULD BE TAKING ORDERS FROM YOU?


YES. BECAUSE I AM A SICK OLD WOMAN WHO IS TRYING TO SAVE THE WORLD AND IF YOU GIVE ME ANY BACKTALK I WILL GET UP OUT OF MY DEATH BED AND SKIN YOU ALIVE STARTING WHERE IT IS MOST SENSITIVE! YOU UNDERSTAND ME?
YES, MA'AM.

EVERYONE WHO HAS ONE SHOULD BE IN COSTUME.
WHY?
WE GO TO FIGHT GODS AND MAGIC. CEREMONIAL GARB HAS A VALUE AND SHOULD BE WORN.

"GIVE ME A PHONE AND GET OUT OF MY WAY. WE NEED SOME MORE WARM BODIES AND I GOT SOME FAVORS TO CALL IN AND SOME ARMS TO TWIST."

THIS IS THE BEST YOU COULD DO?

TIMES IS HARD. LEGGEE-- WE GOT A NEW SPORTSMASTER, THE ENFORCER, KID NAMED KARMA WHO USED TO RUN WITH THE DOOM PATROL, JAVELIN, MAJOR VICTORY. WHO'S THAT OVER BY FIREHAWK?

CALLED HIMSELF THE WRITER. SAID HE WAS "WRITING HIMSELF INTO THIS STORY"

...BUT, YOU SEE, MY PROBLEM WAS THIS--ONCE I ACTUALLY WROTE MYSELF INTO THE STORY, TECHNICALLY I BECAME PART OF THE CONTINUITY AND NOW SOMEONE ELSE IS CONTROLLING ME --

--AS I USED TO CONTROL MY CHARACTERS! IT'S HORRIBLE!

HM. WELL. IMAGINE THAT

HOW WAS YOUR TRIP UP HERE, JOHN HENRY?

INTERESTIN'. I'LL GIVE IT THAT.

...AND SO I SCRIPT WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN HERE ON THE COMPUTER, YOU SEE, AND THEN IT HAPPENS, UNLESS REALITY GOES TOO FAST.

BUT SOMETIMES THE WRITER WHO IS NOW WRITING ME INTERVENES AND THEN I SEE WHAT'S ABOUT TO HAPPEN

LOOK.

Panel 3
[Black Adam gestures at what John Henry is wearing. John Henry squints at him. Turner smiles a little.]

BLACK ADAM
You don't have a costume?

JH
Ah know who I am. Ain't so sure 'bout you, fancypants.

YOU DON'T HAVE A COSTUME?

AH KNOW WHO I AM. AIN'T SO SURE 'BOUT YOU, FANCYPANTS.

SEE? I KNEW HE WAS GOING TO SAY THAT!

I'M REALLY BEGINNING TO WONDER ABOUT ALL THIS. GETTING THE CHARGES AGAINST ME DISMISSED WOULD BE GREAT, BUT IT MEANS NUTHIN' IF I GET MYSELF KILLED!

I CAN AVOID A BLOW IF I KNOW IT'S COMIN', BUT IF YOU'RE IN THE MIDDLE OF A WAR, HOW THE HELL YOU SUPPOSED TO KNOW WHERE EVERY BLOW'S COMIN' FROM?!

OKAY, ENOUGH SOCIALIZING. TIME TO GET THIS SHOW ON THE ROAD.

IN SHEER NUMBERS, THE ODDS ARE AGAINST YOU, BUT YOU GOT A FAIR AMOUNT OF PEOPLE HERE WHO ARE SUPOSEDLY INVULNERABLE. YOUR BEST ODDS OF COMING BACK ALIVE ARE TO HIT THE TARGETS HARD AND FAST.

"YOU LET THEM BOG YOU DOWN AND IT'S GOING TO BE A BLOODBATH"

<NOW, "SISTER," ARE YOU READY TO TELL US WHY YOU WERE SPYING ON US?>

OH, HELL... LOOK, I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE SAYING, I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU WANT... DOESN'T ANYONE HERE SPEAK ENGLISH?

YOU CAN'T DO THIS TO ME! I KNOW MY RIGHTS! I WANT TO CALL MY LAWYER!

<SHE MUST HAVE SOMETHING TO DO WITH THAT STRANGE BRIGHT LIGHT THAT FLASHED IN AND AWAY FROM THE AREA AN HOUR AGO COMMANDER! MAKE HER TALK!>

<IT WILL HAVE TO BE ANOTHER TIME. THEY ARE FRAIL CREATURES, THESE WOMEN FROM PATRIARCH'S WORLD SMALL WONDER THEY HAVE BEEN SO LONG HELD IN THRALL TO MEN!>

<COMMANDER! WE ARE UNDER ATTACK! META-HUMANS SUDDENLY APPEARED AT THE EDGE OF THE LAKE AND ARE SWARMING OVER!>

<TO THE FORTIFICATIONS! YOU—SOUND THE ALARM FOR YOUR PEOPLE!>

HAWROOO!

NO MERCY. THEY WILL GIVE YOU NONE.
ATTACK!

HARROOOOOO!
BRAAAAAT
BRAAAAAT

URGHHHK!... MY DADDY... TOLE ME... NEVER HIT LADIES!
BRATAT!
BRATAT!

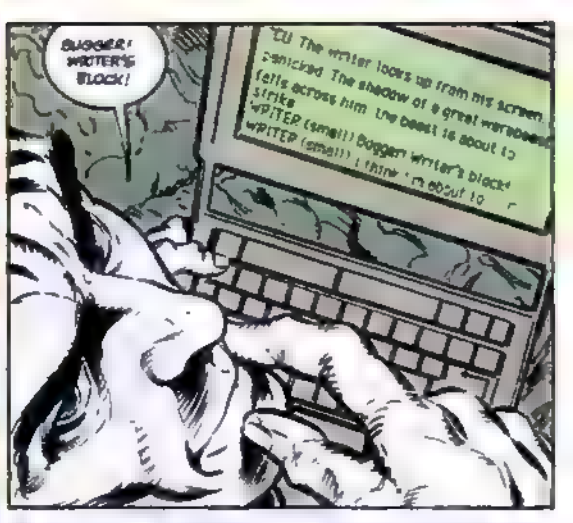
CRAK!
BUT MY DADDY'S DEAD AND YOU DON'T STRIKE ME MUCH AS LADIES!

SO--AMANDA HAD IT PEGGED RIGHT.

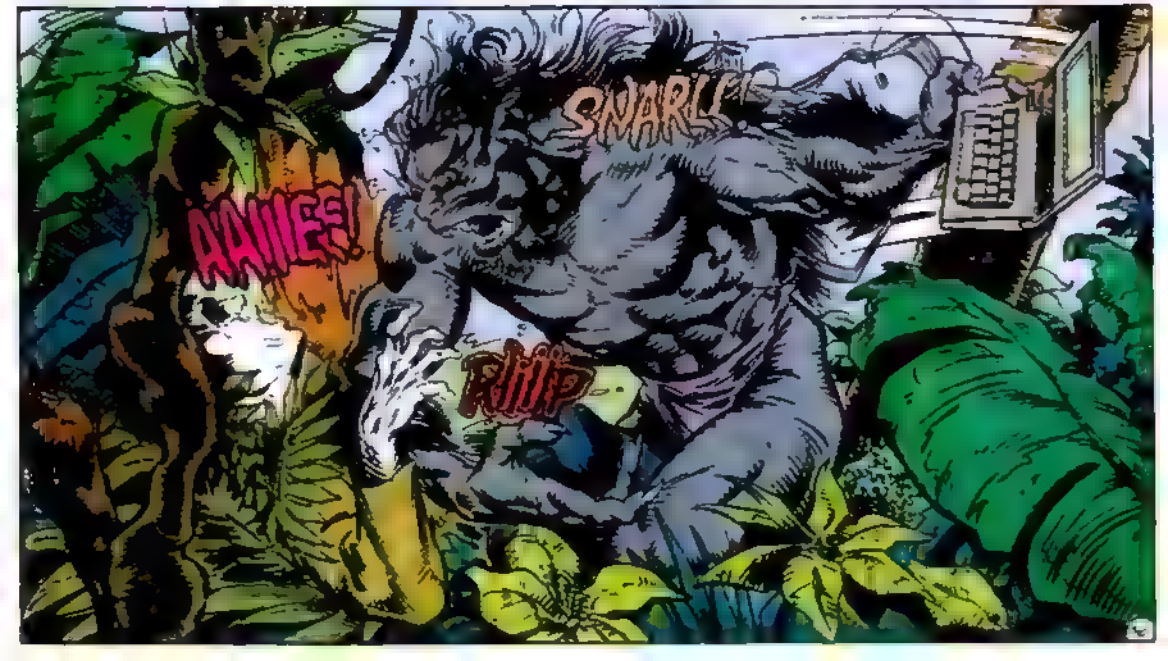
YOU! JAVELIN! FOLLOW ME--QUIETLY.
EH? WHAT'S THIS LOT UP TO, THEN?
QUIETLY? IN THE MIDDLE OF A [illegible]! HOW IS ANYTHING DONE QUIETLY IN THE MIDDLE OF A WAR?!

WHEREVER THEY'RE GOING, IT'S AWAY FROM THE MIDDLE OF ALL THING AND THAT'S RIGHT BY ME!

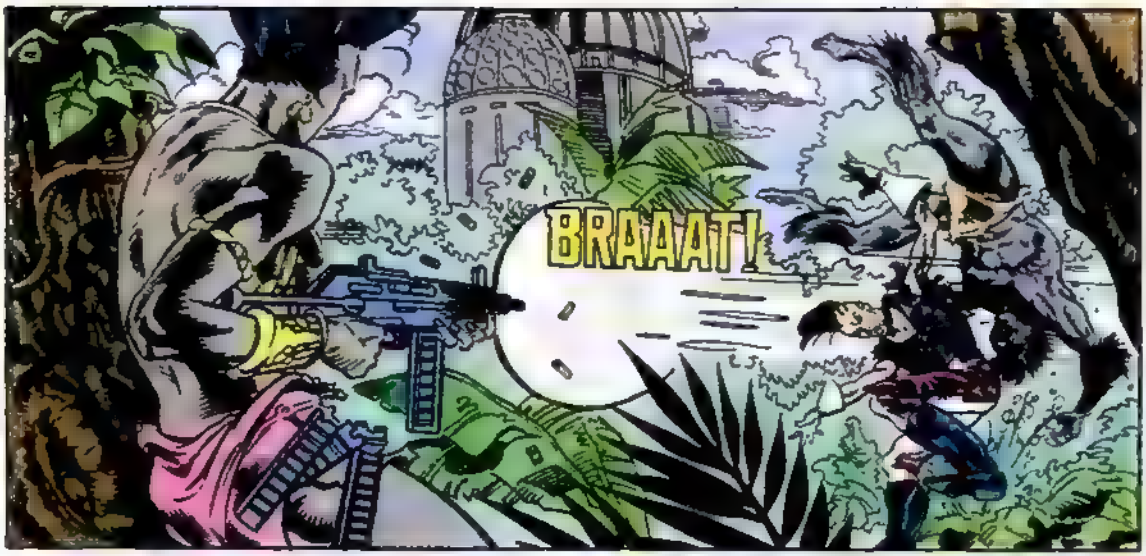
"AMAZON NEAREST WRITER GETS HIT BY STRAY BULLET PAWINGGGG"
PAWINGGG
"WEREBEAST ATTACKING WRITER... BURSTS INTO FLAME DUE TO SPONTANEOUS COMBUSTION PWOOMP! YARRRGH"
PWOOMP
YARRGH


BUGGER! WRITER'S BLOCK!
(1) The writer looks up from his screen, panicked. The shadow of a great werebeast falls across him. The beast is about to strike.
WRITER (small) Bugger! Writer's block!
WRITER (small) I think I'm about to

I THINK I'M ABOUT TO

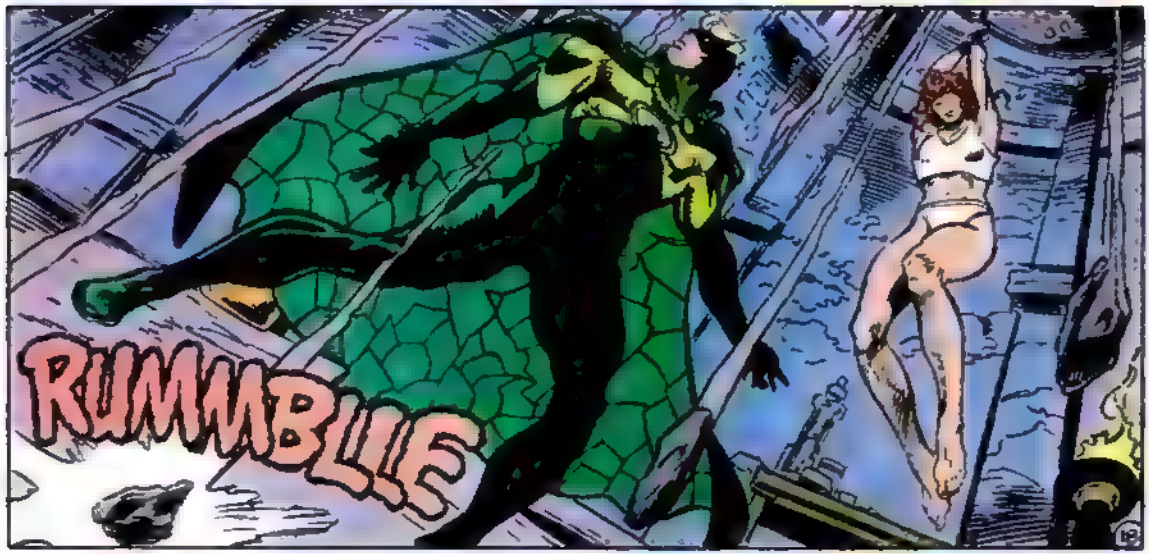

SNARL!
AAIIIE!
RIIIP

WATCH IT WITH THOSE LASERS, SON. AIM TO WOUND IF AT ALL POSSIBLE.
GOTCHA, MAJOR!
RAOOLL
WHOOM!
THE HELL WITH IT. TAKE OUT THEIR KNEES.
THIS WAY, ALL OF YOU! WE'RE CLEARING A PATH INTO THE TEMPLE! FOLLOW US IN!
A REAL COUNT--AND HE'S GORGEOUS!
HEY, M'MAN--DO SOME OF THAT CHOP-SOCKY JUNK! IF I SEE IT, I CAN DO IT!
FIGHT YOUR BATTLES, PUNK, AND I'LL FIGHT MINE.
CHOK!
RAWWL!
I CAN MAKE HIM MISS ME ALL DAY, BUT THERE'S TOO MANY HERE FOR ME TO COPE WITH! I GOT TO GET OUT BEFORE I--!

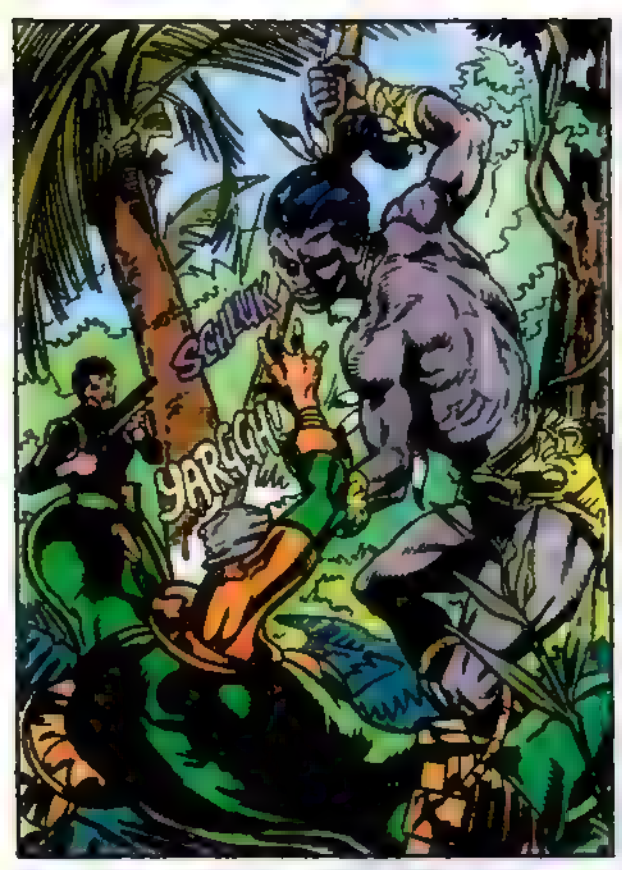

BRAAAT!

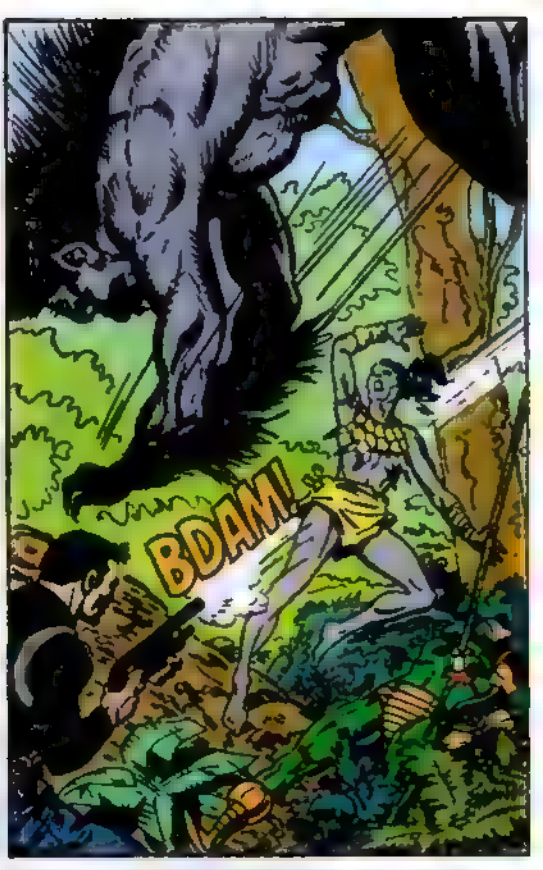
WHO IS IT? PLEASE, WHOEVER YOU ARE, LET ME DOWN! I'LL DO WHATEVER YOU...

...ASK.
WOULD YOU NOW? ASK TO BE DEGRADED, THEN BEG TO BE HUMILIATED PROCLAIM YOUR DESIRE TO BE COMPLETELY HELPLESS AND IN THRALL TO ME.
WELL, IVY? WHAT IS YOUR ANSWER, PRETTY POISON?

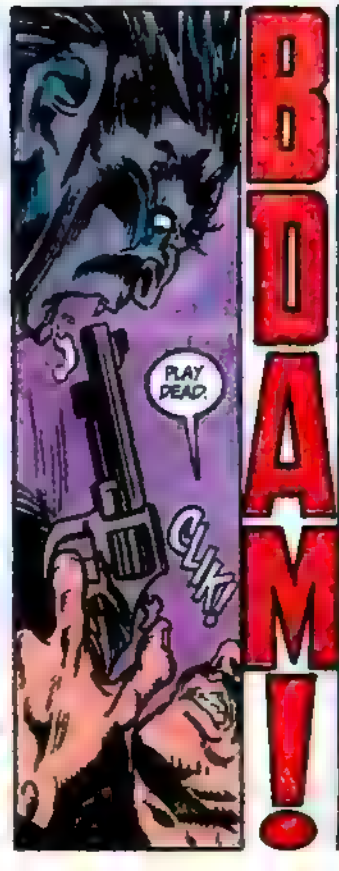

RUMMBLE

NO!
DON'T LEAVE ME LIKE THIS!
DON'T LEAVE ME LIKE THIS! THE PLACE IS COMING APART AT THE SEAMS! PLEASE!
RUMMBLE
THE ISLAND'S BREAKING UP! IT'S DESTROYING ITSELF!
MAGER! CHANGE INTO A LIGHT BEAM, REACH ALL OUR PEOPLE AND TELL THEM TO RETREAT NOW!
WHAT'S GOING ON?!
RUMMBLE


SCHLIK
YARGH


BDAM!

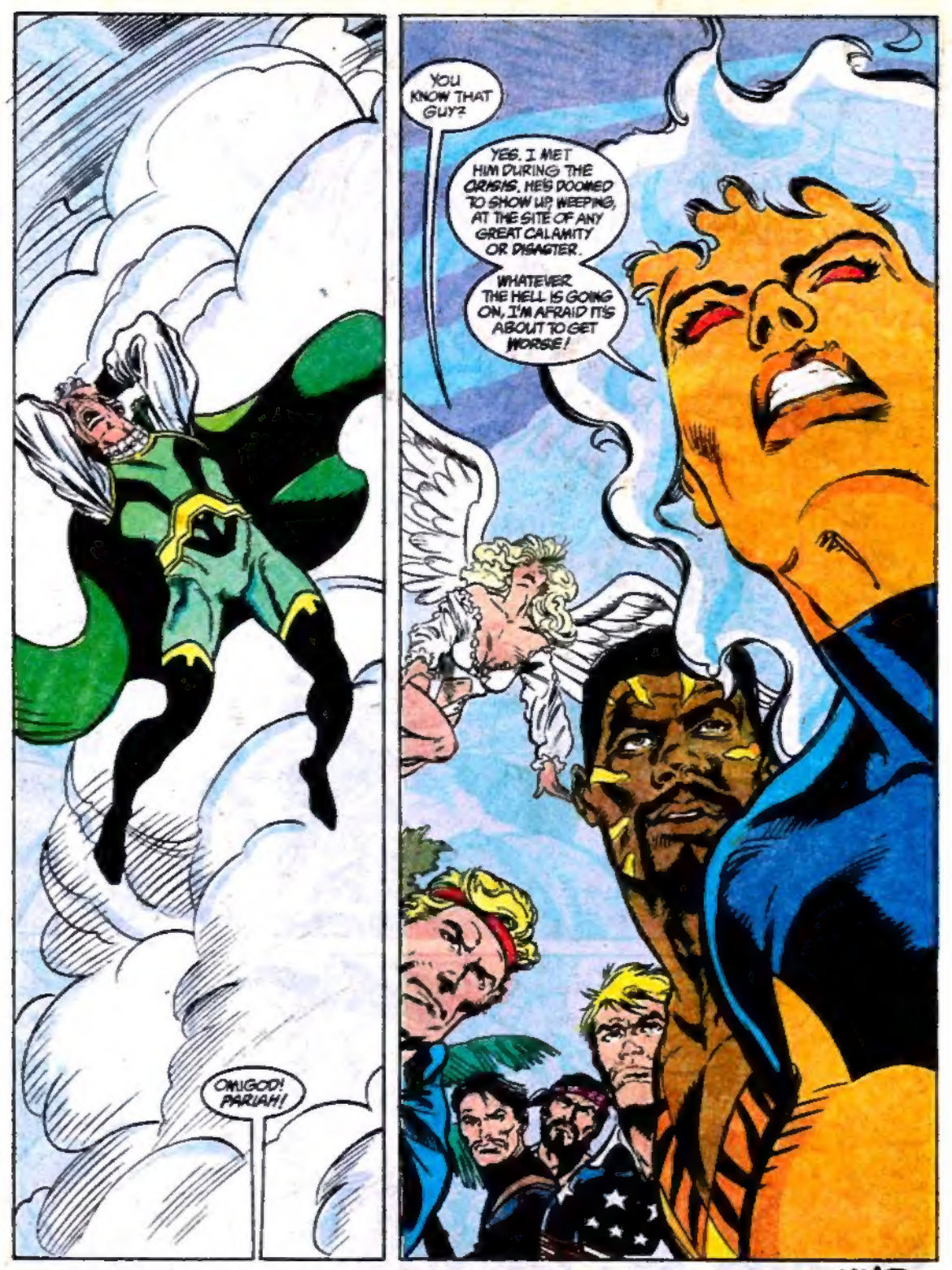
BAD DOG


PLAY DEAD.
CLIK!

BDAM!

RUMMMBBLE
BRODAAR!
RRUMMBLE

KRAKADOOM!
WHO'S THIS?
I FOUND HER STRUNG UP WHILE I WAS ZAPPING AROUND. THEN THE ISLAND STARTED SHAKING ITSELF TO PIECES AND I THOUGHT I'D BETTER GET OUT.
LOOK! THERE'S SOMEONE HOVERING OVER THE ISLAND!
POISON IVY?! WHAT THE HELL WAS SHE DOING THERE?



TO FIND OUT JUST HOW BAD THINGS GET, CHECK CONCLUDING ISSUES OF **WAR OF THE GODS!** AND THEN JOIN US NEXT MONTH AS WE BEGIN TO UNRAVEL

The Mystery of the ATOM!

SUICIDE NOTES

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Dear Dan,

The biggest surprise of SUICIDE SQUAD #54 was that it was only 22 pages long. This "Dragon's Hoard" story is plotted tighter than a drum. We get a bevy of new Russian metahumans, the new Red Shadows: Mrs. Gradenko, the werebear; Yerosha, the troublemaker with the power to fool a man's senses; Lamia, a woman with a mysterious erotic hypnotic power, and the terrifying Shrek. We also see the Thinker and the Oracle as part of the Squad; in fact, they're a team! We get a glimpse of the new Atom's origins and an ominous connection to Deadshot. And as if there aren't enough interesting characters to keep us busy, out pop the Blackhawks. Along with all of this we got a recap, Squad assignments, more story which finally concluded with the Wall being shot. Cripes, I'm surprised my letter wasn't 22 pages long. This story may take a little extra work to keep track of the plot, but it is worth it.

Patrick Ross
383 Cannon Green
Goleta, CA 93117

Thanks for the kind words and the handy recap, Pat.

* * * * *

Dear Dan,

You still seem to be pushing the idea that Adam Cray is *not* Ray Palmer. I'm going to change my tune and be the first to say that Ray Palmer and Adam Cray are two different people. Adam is not the "new" Atom, but he does have the Atom's powers. I have a different theory, stemming from Barbara and Adam's talk about the Atom. I think Ray is not dead, but hiding from his would-be killers. I think he'll turn up as soon as he hears about Adam's workings with the Squad. This little story isn't finished. It's just beginning.

Lawton *killed* Deadshot? This is an interesting premise. Floyd is damn near certifiable. How can he ever *not* be a part of the Suicide Squad?

Sir Jon Johnson
64 Indian Hill Avenue
Portland, CT 06480

Sir Jon, for the answers to all (well, some) of your Atom question, see the next issue box.

* * * * *

Dear Dan,

Re: SUICIDE SQUAD #54

Gort is, in many ways, the perfect character to add to the team. Like Ravan, he is an established Ostrander nasty who's faced the Squad and has a vendetta against it. Like in the earlier issues, he's forced to serve on the Squad through force, though he is getting something in return.

One thing I particularly enjoyed about issue #54 was the cover—to be more specific, the sneakers on the cover. I must admit, I never imagined Floyd wearing sneakers while parachuting over the jungle, but hope you make it a regular event. Of course, the wonderfully impossible contortions exhibited by both characters in the Isherwood/Kesel cover crack me up—a wonderful visual joke that left me hoping I'm not the only one in the world who got it.

Overall, "The Dragon's Hoard" is proving to be a good read and visually interesting. Most important, it left me wanting to run right out and buy #55, so off I go, to camp out in front of Gecko Books and wait for 30 days.

Thanks for listening.

R. Kevin Doyle
1414 Pilkio Apt. F.
Honolulu, HI 96822

Kevin, I think you're the only person in the world who got the joke. I, for one, have no idea what you're talking about.

But I did like the sneakers. Thanks for writing.

* * * * *

Dear Noters,

I had first wanted to write this letter about 18 months ago but, unfortunately, I got sidetracked. Well, now I'm back and the point I wanted to raise then is even more valid now.

I first want to say that the writing on SUICIDE SQUAD was and remains excellent. Everything I have read by John Ostrander, in all his books, has been first-rate, with extremely strong characterizations. The art, I find, is a bit too stylized for my tastes, especially Geof Isherwood's, but it is far more than adequate.

But.

I am greatly disturbed by some of the content of SUICIDE SQUAD. There seems to me a deep and pervasive undercurrent of amorality continually streaming through this book. Amanda Waller is its obvious focal point. Although she may be the only strong, self-assured black female character in all of comic-bookdom, she was and remains a deeply disturbed, perhaps even sociopathic personality. She seems to enjoy controlling, hurting and even killing people. In the first couple of years of the run of SUICIDE SQUAD, I did not really notice this problem, probably because the powerful nobility of Rick Flag was able to provide a strong moderating counterweight to Waller's chaotic leadership.

And then Flag died in SUICIDE SQUAD #26. Without Flag to provide the strength of will to oppose her, Waller began to run amuck. First, there were the lame-brained, unsanctioned missions. Then came missions of personal vengeance. When Waller was jailed because of her own arrogance, I had hoped that the Squad might be reconstituted under new, more level-headed leadership, perhaps under Eve Eden's or Tom Tresser's, and strive for more meaningful goals.

But now the Wall is back and the Squad has fallen even further. The Squad is nothing more than a hit team for hire these days. Through it all, there was an even escalating toll of shattered lives, broken minds and just plain dead bodies.

Waller is manipulative, tying Eden, Tresser, Mark Shaw, Mari McCabe and Simon LaGrieve to herself, because she knows that they cannot help but want to minimize the damage she will wreak. She out-and-out holds Cliff Carmichael as a slave, flogging him should he show any signs of independence. She is abusive to Digger Harkness and Arthur Light, who are only misguided fools, and are only used as comic relief. She nurtures criminality by offering haven to Adam Cray, in exchange for criminal services. She continually tortures the damaged psyches of Count Vertigo, Ben Turner and Floyd Lawton. She promises to help them, but all she ever does is hurt them, by throwing them into unbeatable situations and taunting them to survive.

Why do all these people follow Waller? Why do they give her their allegiance? Are their own personalities so weak or also so amoral that they cannot see that Waller is incredibly destructive? Isn't it obvious that Waller is consumed by guilt and is tortured by her own personal demons and cannot be trusted to make responsible decisions? Can they not think for themselves? Can they not find other ways to achieve justice? For this is not justice at all. At best, I can only call what the Squad now does playing God. It is completely arbitrary and at times seems only to be murder. Sometimes I think that SUICIDE SQUAD is the world's first super-villain team comic book.

This is wrong. It is immoral to present such amoral characters as heroes. At the very least you need to revive some sort of balance to Waller, in order to control her excesses. Perhaps this could be Barbara Gordon, although the sight of her attempting to rid herself of an insecurity by trying to blast someone's head off gives me pause. Perhaps Eden (even with her own self-doubts) or Tresser could find their spines and do something about the misgivings they've been harboring for years.

In real life, the path Waller is on leads to a violent death, and if not stopped now, she would also take a whole lot of other lives with her. It would not be heroic. Very little of what she does these days is heroic. Perhaps Waller could once claim that she was efficient, but she was also cold-blooded. Now she adds a willingness to play both sides and a conviction that she has paid all her dues, with a smug sense of invincibility and a chilling element of remorselessness.

Thanks for listening,
Paul Chin
2329 E. 17th Street
Brooklyn, NY 11229-4437

Great letter, Paul, and one to which it's most difficult to reply. If you were merely condemning the character of Amanda Waller, in fact, I don't think I could provide adequate justification of her actions. I might not even try. But you're not just attacking her or her manipulations; you're questioning our desire to publish stories with such a character as the main focus. I hope I'll be able to explain my decision to do so to your satisfaction.

Paul, it's no secret that SUICIDE SQUAD is the first super-villain team-up book—it always has been. While there are heroes in the book (and by this I mean the genuine "good guys" like Tresser or Nightshade), the bulk of the team's membership has been made up of undesirables since the first issue. And Amanda has been among the most corrupt of them all. Part of the charm of SUICIDE SQUAD is that it does have a perspective different from most other super-hero titles. And the majority of that perspective comes from the unique life that John and Kim have breathed into Amanda Waller.

Amanda's world is not an easy one, and the organization she runs is based on a very tough premise: "If you can't stand the heat, you're dead." But despite her arrogant bluster—despite the private vendettas, high body count, arbitrary judgments, and tortured souls working for her—Amanda Waller still gets the job done. And when her excesses caught up to her, she paid the price in hard time.

Since the government commuted her sentence, Amanda has been pretty hard at work. She uncovered a reactionary plot to subvert the government of an Eastern Bloc nation. She prevented an international catastrophe in Jerusalem and put one of the greatest menaces, Kobra, behind bars. She saved Barbara Gordon's life, and offered her new opportunities and a chance to help. She rescued a kidnapped child from the clutches of a madman. And she kept the Dragon's Hoard out of the hands of the Yakuza.

She's not the most lovable individual in comics, I'll grant you, but you could search for a long time in this business before you found a character with half of Amanda Waller's personality, motivation, humor, brains or guts. Any way you look at her (assuming you can put up with her enough to spend any time with her at all) Amanda is formidable—and that from a lady without bulletproof skin or heat vision or retractable claws.

You're right in saying that she's a pretty rotten role model, but I'm glad she's on our side, you know? And as long as people are buying this book, Amanda will be there, getting on their nerves and fighting as hard as she can.

*****

Guys (and Kim):

I know that I don't write often; however, I have been with your fine book since issue #1, and have noted a continual improvement in the book's plotlines, resolutions, and direction. Each new issue reads like some spy thriller. I only wish the book were bi-weekly—at least some of the time.

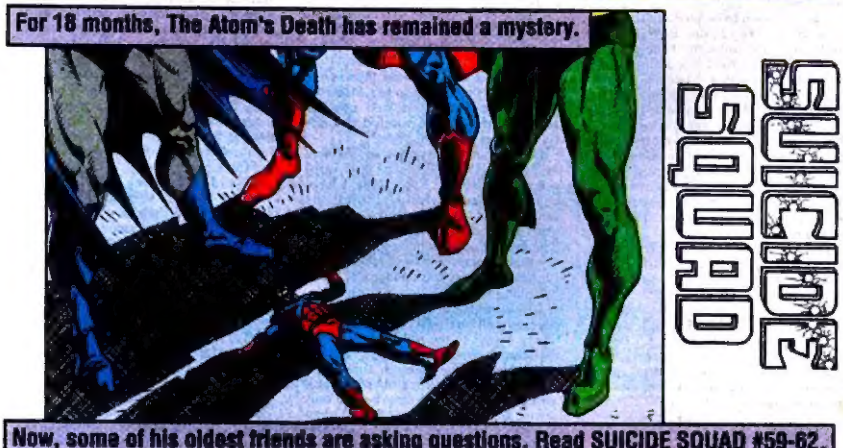
The assassination (attempt?) of Amanda Waller displays, once again, the nerve, the boldness, the daring, of the creative team. Coming on the heels of the disappointing resurrection of Doctor Light in issue #52, this act hits with even more profound impact than usual. (By the way, the rebirth disturbs me...let villains die, and keep them dead. That facet of the Squad's premise uniquely separates SS from most other books on the market).

The Dragon's Hoard is shaping up as another loaded Squad saga, full of the usual mixture of action, espionage, infiltration, mistakes, and intrigue. One question, though: Is the "new" Atom really Ray Palmer or not? After the conversation with Oracle, I remain confused.

Sincerely,
Brian Ott
14595 Prairie Road
Rockton, IL 61072

THE WEASELIEST NEXT ISSUE BOX EVER:

SUICIDE SQUAD #59: "The Mystery of the Atom" is cracked wide open! Finally! Tell your friends!

And to solve the case of one of the early members of the Justice League of America, we'll need a few big guns, right? Check out the ad, figure out who's standing there doing that "My Three Sons" impression, and get back here with a few rich buddies in 30 days! Spread the word!

—Dan Raspler
Nothing But Trouble